

St. Mary's Anglican Church, Timaru

On 20 June 1858 the first Anglican service conducted by a clergyman was held in Timaru, conducted by Bishop Henry John Chitty Harper. In 1859, with the arrival of the immigrant ship Strathallan, along with the Revd George Foster (who held the licence of officiating minister), the parish of Timaru was formed.¹ The foundation stone of the first St. Mary's building was laid on 7 April 1860. The land was donated by the Rhodes Brothers (early landowners of South Canterbury, Wellington and Gisborne), and the building designed by Lieutenant Belfield Woolcombe - the Resident Magistrate. The building was dedicated on 28 April 1861, and the wooden church with a shingle roof became the first church in South Canterbury.^{2,3} In February 1866, the white Pleasant Point stone font was gifted to the church, and a two-manual 22 stop Alexandre harmonium arrived a month later.

In 1868, after a year of stormy church meetings and resignations from the Building Committee, a stone addition of a sanctuary and transepts was designed by Cornelius Cuff of Christchurch, and built by William Forgan. The foundation stone was laid on 22 July 1868 by the Worshipful Master of the St. John's Lodge Timaru, following a procession of the town's Foresters, Oddfellows, and Freemasons lodges. The building project stalled with only the walls erected, and it was not until Christmas Day 1869 that the Church was opened for service.⁴



ST MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, TIMARU (C.T. TEMPLETON 2016)

In 1875 the Ven. Archdeacon Henry W. Harper (son of the Bishop) was appointed vicar of St. Mary's after the Revd Foster's licence was revoked by the Bishop. The foundation stone of the present building was laid on 9 September 1880 by the Very Revd Henry Jacobs, Dean of Christchurch. The building was designed by the Christchurch architect W. B. Armson, in close consultation with Archdeacon Harper. The building is in the Early English style, with the tower being the later Decorated Gothic style, and inspired by Magdalen College, Oxford. The material is Timaru bluestone (Dolerite stone) with Oamaru limestone dressings, and Welsh slate. The ten nave columns are of Aberdeen pink granite and along with the corbels, and bosses were carved by the Godfrey Bros, of Dunedin⁵ whose work is also in the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Dunedin. The

small mottled wall columns in the chancel and transept are of New South Wales marble.⁶ The completed nave was opened and consecrated on 26 August 1886 by Bishop Harper once the pipe organ had been installed. The nave was connected to the 1868 stone part to form a temporary chancel and vestry.⁷ The organ was by T. C. Lewis and erected in the temporary chancel by A. H. Hathaway of Dunedin (who later moved to Timaru).⁸ The Lewis organ was opus number 442 and cost £400 delivered at the docks.⁹ The specification was as follows:

GREAT			PEDAL		
Open Diapason	8		Sub Bass	16	
Lieblich Gedact	8				
Salicional	8		COUPLERS		
Octave	4		Swell to Great		
			Swell to Pedal		
			Great to Pedal		
SWELL					
Geigen Principal	8		Two Composition pedals		
Rohr Flöte	8				
Viole de Gambe	8	prepared for	Compass: 56/30		
Voix Celeste	8	prepared for			
Geigen Principal	4		Mechanical key and stop action		

It was not until November 1902 that the prepared for string ranks were ordered from Lewis & Co., and installed early the next year.¹⁰

The foundation stone for the completed church was laid on 14 July 1907, the architects for the chancel, transept, vestry and tower being Collins & Harman of Christchurch, and the contractor McBrides of Timaru.¹¹ The tower was completed on 11 November 1908, and the re-opening and dedication of the completed building on 6 May 1909.¹² The organ having been dismantled and moved into the transept by A. H. Hathaway.¹³

In 1920 the organ was moved to immediately behind the south side of the rearranged choir seating.¹⁴ During 1926, the water motor was replaced with an electric organ blower, and the electrical supply was unreliable at first, so that at times a choir man had to deputise as an organ blower.¹⁵

A reconfiguration and completion of the east end of the church was mentioned in the Vicar's report of 1940. In 1941 the organ was dismantled and all but the heaviest parts sent to Herbert Brett in Christchurch for rebuilding. The organ was to be re-sited in the clergy vestry at the base of the tower, so the doorways were enlarged into wide openings for the organ. It took over six months of working by hand to chip through the six foot thick walls of concrete and bluestone. A new clergy vestry was built over the crypt at the south-east side of the church.¹⁶ The whole redevelopment was planned by the church architect (and church member) Percy Watts Rule, the joinery was done by Messrs Piesse Brothers of Christchurch, and all the oak carving by F. G. Gurnsey of Christchurch. Gurnsey's work in St Mary's can also be seen in the altar and reredos, altar book stand, litany-desk, pulpit, choir stalls and Elworthy doors into the Chapel of St Michael and All Angels.¹⁷ The organ, choir stalls, and clergy vestry were consecrated on Advent Sunday, 28 November 1943.¹⁸ The carving in the centre panel under the bay of front pipes is the symbol of St Mary the Virgin. The birds of the case, from bass to treble are: kiwi, thrush, native owl, tui, sparrow, crested shag, lark, and penguin.

In 1950 three more stops were added to the instrument, an Open Diapason 8, Fifteenth 2 and Trumpet 8.¹⁹ The two side panels on which the birds are carved were (until the 1982 rebuild) counterweighted so that they could be slid up for tuning access to the reed springs, but the pipes were so tightly spaced that it was a source of frustration for the tuners. That year also saw a delay in construction of the carved oak screen, designed by P. W. Rule between the chapel and

the chancel. The Bishop requested to the Vestry that the carvers Gurnsey & Vivian (Gurnsey's former apprentice and co-worker), who were to carve the screen, be used instead to carve the screen in the Cathedral side chapel first - in preparation of the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury in December of that year. In the circumstances it was an offer the Vestry couldn't refuse. So it was not until 28 June 1953 that the screen, war memorial window and shrine of remembrance was dedicated by Archbishop A. W. Averill. Unfortunately, P. W. Rule had died a few weeks before the screen was erected. Most of the screen carving is Vivian's work.²⁰ In 1961, the organ was fully electrified by Bert Hayman, and the wooden pedal pipes that had been at the north end of the aisle, were relocated inside the organ chamber and the iron grille and curtain placed in the old clergy doorway.²¹



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, TIMARU (C.T. TEMPLETON 2016)

GREAT ²²

Open Diapason No. 1	8	
Open Diapason No. 2	8	§
Rohr Flute	8	
Salicional	8	
Principal	4	§

PEDAL

Open Diapason	16	§
Sub-Bass	16	
Principal	8	§
Bass Flute	8	

SWELL

Geigen Principal	8	
Lieblisch Gedackt	8	
Flute	8	§
Viol de Gamba	8	
Voix Celeste	8	
Geigen Principal	4	
Oboe	8	
Trumpet	8	§

Compass: 56/30

Action: Electro-pneumatic / direct electric

§ Addition by Herbert Brett

On 23 December 1980, a contract was signed with the South Island Organ Company Ltd to rebuild the instrument. This involved removing the *en fenêtre* console and turning the swell division 90 degrees so that it could speak through the opening where the console previously was placed. This included a new detached drawstop console and solid state electrical system,

additional pipework, and increasing the compass to 61 notes.²²

GREAT

Bourdon	16	A	*
Open Diapason	8		†
Principal	8	B	§
Rohr Flute	8	A	†
Salicional	8		†
Octave	4		†
Block Flute	4		*
Twelfth	2 ² / ₃		*
Fifteenth	2		§
Tierce	1 ³ / ₅		*
Mixture	19.22.26	III	*
Trumpet	8	C	§
Clarion	4	C	*

SWELL

Open Diapason	8		†
Lieblich Flute	8	D	†
Viol de Gamba	8		†
Voix Celeste	8		†
Principal	4		†
Waldflute	4		§ *
Spitz Flute	2		*
Larigot	1 ¹ / ₃		*
Mixture	22.26.29	III	*
Oboe	8		†
Trompette	8		*
Clarion	4		*
Tremulant			

Compass: 61/30

Electro-pneumatic and direct electric actions

† Lewis pipework

§ Herbert Brett

* New SIOC

PEDAL

Resultant Bass	32		*
Open Wood	16		§
Sub Bass	16	E	†
Bourdon	16	A	*
Octave	8		§
Principal	8	B	*
Bass Flute	8		§
Fifteenth	4	B	*
Flute	4	E	*
Super Octave	2	B	
Trombone	16	C	*
Trumpet	8	C	§

COUPLERS

Swell Octave
 Swell Sub Octave
 Swell Unison off
 Swell to Great
 Swell Octave to Great
 Swell Sub Octave to Great
 Swell to Pedal
 Swell Octave to Pedal
 Great to Pedal
 Five thumb pistons to Great
 Five thumb pistons to Swell
 Five toe pistons to Swell
 Five toe pistons to Pedal
 Great and Pedal piston coupler
 General Cancel

Reversible thumb and pedal pistons:

Swell to Great

Great to Pedal

The organ was dedicated on 18 September 1982, with Val Hargraves being conspicuous by her absence from the ceremony as she had just given birth to her youngest daughter earlier that day.

In 1993 the console was moved from its position in a shallow pit at the front left of the centre aisle to its present position at the south wall.

The large piano in the south aisle was built by Adrian Mann - mostly while still a teenager. At 18'8" long, it is said to be the largest piano in the world.



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- 1 Lawrence, Averille. *Strangers and Pilgrims A Hundred Years at St. Mary's Timaru, N.Z.* (Timaru: Timaru Herald, 1962), p.12
- 2 Ibid., p.13
- 3 There are some early accounts that hint that there was an earlier whare [house] at the Arowhenua marae that was set aside as use as a chapel for the early Maori converts to Christianity.
- 4 Lawrence, op.cit., pp.16-19
- 5 Harper, Henry, *St. Mary's Church Timaru, New Zealand.* (Timaru: P.W. Hutton & Co., 1918), pp.7-9
- 6 *Timaru Herald*, 4 March 1886
- 7 Lawrence, op.cit., p.35
- 8 *Timaru Herald*, 24 July 1886, p.3 (although his name is misprinted as G. Hathaway - it was Alfred Henry Hathaway who was working for G.R. West, musical importer of Dunedin).
- 9 Lewis Shop Book, vol. 1, pp.20-21 (Birmingham University Special Collections: British Organ Archive)
- 10 Ibid, vol. 2, p.201
- 11 Harper, op.cit., p.12
- 12 *Order of service on the Re-opening and Dedication of St. Mary's Church on the completion of the Chancel, Transept, Vestry and the Tower May 6th, 1909* (Timaru: W.H. Foden & Co., 1909) [Templeton collection]
- 13 *Timaru Herald*, 6 May 1909, p.6
- 14 Lawrence, op.cit., p.72
- 15 Ibid., p.82
- 16 Ibid., pp.105-7
- 17 Stocker, Mark, *Angels and Roses, the art of Frederick George Gurnsey.* (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 1997), pp.60-62
- 18 *Order of Service on the Consecration and Benediction of the Organ, Choir Stalls and Clergy Vestry, Advent Sunday, 1943* [Templeton collection]
- 19 *Church and People*, 1 July 1950, p.15
- 20 Lawrence, op.cit., pp.127-8
- 21 Ibid., p.139
- 22 South Island Organ Company Archives: St. Mary's job notes